



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOCIOLOGICAL
THOUGHTS OF IBN KHALDUN AND ALI SHARI'ATI
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AL-MUQADDIMAH
AND ON THE SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses and compares two important works of two prominent Muslim scholars of different periods - one classical and the other contemporary. The works are *Al-Muqaddimah* by Ibn Khaldun and *On the Sociology of Islam* by Ali Shari'ati. The two works provide evidence for a comparative sociological thought of the two thinkers who have different cultural backgrounds and orientations. Specifically, the study was undertaken to achieve three main objectives: 1) to compare the sociological thought of Ibn Khaldun and Ali Shari'ati based on their selected works, 2) to produce a synthesized thought on ideal society based on the views of these two thinkers and 3) to analyse the influence of their respective social environment in shaping their sociological thoughts. These objectives were achieved by answering three corresponding research questions: 1) What are the differences and similarities in the thought of Ibn Khaldun and Ali Shari'ati? 2) What theory of ideal society can be derived from the views of these two thinkers? and (3) In what way have their social environments influenced their thought? Methodologically, the study followed 'The Ten Steps Content Analysis' technique in drawing comparison and identifying the differences and similarities between the two respective scholars as detailed in the Methodology Chapter. In generating their synthesized thought, the study was inspired by the approach employed by McNelis (1972) in one of his works. In terms of findings, the research has found that there are aspects which are peculiar to each of the thinker such as their scientific and philosophical approaches in constructing their views and thought as reported in the Findings Chapter. More importantly, the study found significant commonalities between the two, particularly in terms of their interest in social philosophy, which consequently shed light on their respective sociological thoughts. The findings also showed that there were significant influences of their respective academic, socio-cultural and religious backgrounds on their thoughts. In conclusion, Ibn Khaldun can be said to have provided a scientific floor for Ali Shari'ati to build his metaphysical ceiling for his sociological thought. Some recommendations and suggestions for future study are also proposed at the end of this dissertation.

ملخص البحث

هذه الدراسة تُحلّل وتُقارن بين عمليين مُهمّين لاثنين من أبرز العلماء المسلمين لفترتين مختلفتين إحداهما كلاسيكية والأخرى معاصرة. العملان هما؛ "المقدّمة" لابن خلدون، و "علم اجتماع الإسلام" لعلي شريعتي. العملان قدّما دليلاً على وجود الفكر الاجتماعي المقارن لاثنين من المفكرين الذين لديهما خلفيات وتوجّهات ثقافية مختلفة. تحديداً، أجريت الدراسة لتحقيق ثلاثة أهداف رئيسية: (1) لمقارنة الفكر الاجتماعي عند ابن خلدون وعلي شريعتي بناء على عمليهما المختارين، (2) لتقديم الفكر المؤلّف للمجتمع المثالي استناداً لآراء هذين المفكرين، (3) وتحليل تأثير البيئة الاجتماعية الخاصة بكل منهما في تشكيل أفكارهما الاجتماعية. هذه الأهداف تحققت من خلال الإجابة على ثلاثة أسئلة مناظرة لها وهي: (1) ما الاختلافات والتشابهات بين فكر كلٍّ من ابن خلدون وعلي شريعتي؟ (2) ما نظرية المجتمع المثالي التي يمكن استخلاصها من وجهة نظر هذين المفكرين؟ (3) وبأيّ طريقة أثرت البيئات الاجتماعية لديهما في فكرهم؟ منهجياً، اتّبعَت الدراسة طريقة "الخطوات العشر لتحليل المضمون" في إجراء المقارنة، وتحديد أوجه الشبه والاختلاف بين العالمين المعيّنين كما هو مفصّل في فصل المنهجية. لتوليد فكرهما المؤلّف، فإنّ الدراسة قد استلهمت النهج المتبع من قبل (McNelis) (1972م) في واحدة من أعماله. من حيث النتائج، هناك جوانب متفرّدة لكلِّ مفكّر مثل المناهج العلمية والفلسفية في بناء وجهات نظرهم وفكرهم كما ورد في فصل النتائج. الأهمّ من ذلك، أنّ الدراسة وجدت قواسم مشتركة مهمة بين الاثنين، لا سيما من حيث اهتمامهما بالفلسفة الاجتماعية التي بالتالي تسلّط الضوؤ على الأفكار الاجتماعية الخاصة بكلِّ منهما. أظهرت النتائج أيضاً أنّ هناك تأثيرات كبيرة من الخلفيات الأكاديمية والاجتماعية والثقافية والدينية الخاصة بكلِّ منهما على أفكارهما. ختاماً، يمكن القول أنّ ابن خلدون قدّم أرضية علمية لعلي شريعتي لبناء نموذج الميتافيزيقي في الفكر الاجتماعي. بعض المقترحات والتوصيات للدراسات المستقبلية قد قُدّمت في ختام هذه الأطروحة.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Sociology and Anthropology.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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... This is not an easy journey...

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my family especially to my

mother and late father, husband, and my dearest children.

Their never-ending prayers, support, encouragement and constant love have

sustained me throughout my life.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study is to compare the sociological thoughts of two Muslim sociologists namely, Ibn Khaldun and Ali Shari'ati who come from two different periods with their respective social, cultural and political backgrounds. Indeed, many studies have been conducted separately on different aspects of these two Muslim thinkers including their works, thoughts as well as contributions to knowledge, particularly to the discipline of social sciences like history, sociology and political science. This study compares selected aspects of these two figures, particularly in terms of their thinking and the factors that have influenced their respective thoughts.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Understanding contemporary social phenomena in the light of past societies is would undoubtedly provide a wider horizon in dealing with modern social realities. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) is selected for this study because he is known as a traditional scholar with comprehensive knowledge. Furthermore, his thoughts and approaches in the study of society resemble modern scientific investigations of social phenomena. Being a prominent scholar of the 14th century, this scholar has contributed greatly in the discipline of social science like economics, politics, history and particularly sociology. From the time Ibn Khaldun was discovered until today, his ideas, works and thoughts have become references for many works of latter scholars. Schmidt (1967) writes that the writings of Ibn Khaldun are some of the most significant and

comprehensive references for seeking answers regarding contemporary social phenomena (p. 45).

Meanwhile, Ali Shari'ati (1933-1977), an Iranian scholar of the 20th century became prominent, particularly during the Shah regime and therefore can be said to represent the Muslim social thinkers of modern times. However, unlike Ibn Khaldun, fewer studies have been conducted on him despite his rich sociological thoughts as reflected in his various lectures and writings which will be discussed in greater detail later.

At any rate, both thinkers are prominent Muslim scholars of their respective times with sociological orientation and this fulfils one of the researcher's selection criteria. Ibn Khaldun's works are rich and significant for fulfilling different intellectual analysis. On the significance of studying the thoughts and contributions of Ali Shari'ati, the following remarks by Nadeem Hasnain (2013) is of significant bearing:

Dr. Shari'ati studied and experienced many philosophical, theological and social schools of thought with an Islamic view. One could say that he was a Muslim Muhajir who rose from the depth of the ocean of eastern mysticism, ascended to the heights of the formidable mountains of western social sciences, yet was not overwhelmed, and he returned to our midst with all the jewels of this fantastic voyage (p. 160).

Based on this background, it is crucial to investigate these two figures in terms of their personality and thoughts particularly by conducting a deeper analysis of their prominent works which in this case are *Al-Muqaddimah* and *On the Sociology of Islam*, respectively.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today, most studies in social sciences in general including sociology concentrate on empirical studies of social phenomena. Only a few scholars like Battah Abdalla (1988), Khalifa Ibrahim (1972), Dalkesh Mahmood (2007) and some others are concerned with the analysis of scholars' thoughts. The present study is devoted to fill this gap and hopes to be able to add to the existing works of the latter nature.

As far as the existing comparative studies are concerned, there are more works comparing Ibn Khaldun with scholars like Auguste Comte, Machiavelli and Al-Ghazali than those comparing the thought of Ibn Khaldun and those of Ali Shari'ati. In this context, it is obvious that the thoughts of these two Muslim social scholars need to be further explored, analysed and compared in order to gain further insights on them, particularly with regards to their relevance to contemporary situations. In particular, the study attempts to synthesize the thoughts of these two Muslim scholars while discussing also their impact on contemporary Muslim scholarship.

In view of the unique qualities of their respective sociological thoughts, this comparative study also reveals the factors that might have contributed to the similarities and differences in their ideas, views and opinions. Hence, the reference made to their social, cultural, academic and other backgrounds is hoped to demonstrate the extent of such influence on their sociological thoughts.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the above backdrop, it is understood that the main objectives to be achieved by this study are as follows:

1. To compare the sociological thoughts of Ibn Khaldun and Ali Shari'ati based on the study of their two respective works namely *Al-Muqaddimah* and *On the Sociology of Islam*.
2. To produce a synthesized thought on the concept of an ideal Muslim society based on the study of the two works.
3. To analyse the influence of their respective social environments in shaping their thoughts.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Corresponding to the above objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the differences and similarities in the thoughts of Ibn Khaldun and Ali Shari'ati as reflected in *Al-Muqaddimah* and *On the Sociology of Islam*, respectively?
2. What is the concept of an ideal Muslim society as derived from the two respective works of these two thinkers?
3. What are the factors that might have influenced their thoughts?

1.5 DESCRIPTION OF WORKS USED IN THIS STUDY

As mentioned earlier, the study of the thoughts of these two Muslim thinkers is based on their two respective works namely *Al-Muqaddimah* and *On the Sociology of Islam*. The original version of *Al-Muqaddimah* was produced by Ibn Khaldun in 1377.

The *Muqaddimah* is part of *Kitab al-'Ibar* which mainly discusses the nature of civilisation (Ibn Khaldun, 2005:p. 459). Meanwhile, the work of Ali Shari'ati is mainly a compilation of a series of his lectures delivered in 1972. The contents of

Shari'ati's *On the Sociology of Islam* are highly philosophical and critical in nature and the work is filled with modern terms and theories such as social stratification, sociology of *shirk*, social change and social class.

The works are both translated from Arabic and Persian respectively and what follows is a brief description of the two respective versions of their works used as the main texts in this study.

1.5.1 The Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldun

The work is a translated version of *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History; The Classic Islamic History of the World* of Ibn Khaldun, the 2005 edition which consists of 465 pages, with the introduction by Franz Rosenthal. The introduction page of the new version is written by Bruce B. Lawrence which is abridged and edited by N. J. Dawood and published by Princeton University Press in the USA. Franz Rosenthal produced his translation by comparing de Slane's translated work of *The Muqaddimah* and other previous translations, giving particular attention to de Slane's version (2005:p. xxxiv).

1.5.2 On the Sociology of Islam of Ali Shari'ati

Meanwhile, Ali Shari'ati's work entitled *On the Sociology of Islam* is actually a compilation of a series of his lectures delivered in 1972. The translation of this work from Persian to English was done by Hamid Algar and published in 1991. It consists of 162 pages and was published by Al-Hoda in Tehran.

1.6 MAIN FOCUS OF COMPARISON

As a comparative study, the work investigates various aspects of these two figures, focussing mainly on the similarities and differences between the two on selected

aspects. In particular, it focuses on the thoughts of both scholars and how factors like their life background, education, political involvement and socio-cultural circumstances left some bearing upon the development of their thoughts. The need for this kind of comparative study is deeply felt in view of the scarcity of works that compare the two figures, especially in the areas which will be indicated later in the literature review of this thesis.

One of the important outcomes of this study is the development of a synthesized Muslim sociological thought on the concept of an ideal Muslim society which is hoped to add and enrich the existing theoretical and conceptual discourses on the sociology of Islam.

1.7 JUSTIFICATIONS

Many social studies and research today focus on contemporary issues and only a few have undertaken a comparative study involving classical and modern figures. This may be attributed to the impact of the positivistic approach in studying social phenomena. Positivistic approach is a form of empiricism established in the philosophical system of Auguste Comte that rejects metaphysics and theology as the means for seeking knowledge. Another reason could be due to the difficulty in applying historical sociology in research, particularly in finding causal explanations as viewed by Smith (1991: p. 1). Historical sociology refers to the study of the origins and development of societies and of other social phenomena that seeks to understand their underlying laws and principles (p. 2).

It is obvious from the works by and on Ibn Khaldun and Ali Shari'ati, that their sociological thoughts are unique products of their respective times. Attempts to develop a synthesized Muslim sociological thought from their views and theories can

enlighten us further on the crucial elements that constitute Islamic religious and sociological thoughts.

In addition, the study can reveal the distinctive methods and approaches adopted by these two Muslim thinkers in studying social phenomena. Furthermore, this kind of study is in line with the aspirations of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) which encourages its students to undertake comparative study as one of the Islamisation of human knowledge strategies.

1.8 LIMITATIONS

Due to the nature of the research, its methodology and its anticipated findings, this study is expected to have certain limitations. Since the research is a comparative study of the sociological thoughts involving historical and contemporary scholars, it is a challenge for the researcher to justify the most appropriate method to be applied as well as to develop and use the adequate conceptual framework for the research.

In the first place, the focus of this study confines itself only to two sociologists and this limits its scope of investigation. This is further reduced to only one work of each thinker namely *The Muqaddimah* and *On the Sociology of Islam*, respectively. The duration allowed for the researcher to complete her study justifies this decision.

Even the selected works are the translated ones i.e. the English versions of respective Arabic and Persian works. Keeping in mind the possibility of being inadequately translated, the researcher has to ensure that the general themes generated in this study are truly representative of their original ideas without being influenced by their details.

As such, the study adopts a safer strategy by focusing on a few selected aspects that clearly represent these scholars major thoughts, theories and ideas. In discussing the influence of their thoughts on modern sociology, this study also consults the views of a few writers and their works to cross-check and validate the researcher's general understanding of the contents of these two works. Even these views and perspectives might have gone through several processes of transformation and modification.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are different ways of doing literature review. One may begin by identifying relevant themes and proceeding to review the works in the light of those themes. Another way is by categorizing relevant works, reviewing them accordingly and highlighting the crucial concepts, themes, and other important ideas relevant for achieving the purposes of literature review which are among others, to establish the gap between existing literature and the present study and to indicate the way this study benefits from the existing literature such as in methodology or theory aspects. This review adopts the latter approach.

To understand the sociological thoughts of Ibn Khaldun and Ali Shari'ati, there is a need to review some of their respective works. Since Ibn Khaldun's *Al-Muqaddimah* and Ali Shari'ati's *On the Sociology of Islam* are to be used as the main works to be analyzed, they are to be specially treated in the relevant parts of this study. For now, a review of other related works will be done and this includes works by and on them.

2.1 COMPARATIVE WORKS INVOLVING IBN KHALDUN

There are some comparative studies involving Ibn Khaldun. For instance, Hacer Asik Ev (2010) has compared the epistemology of Ibn Khaldun to that of John Locke. Douglas H. Garrison (2012) compares Ibn Khaldun's science with the modern social science including the theoretical aspects of society, the state and the revolution.

There are other studies comparing the thoughts of Ibn Khaldun to those of other scholars. For example, Taghi Azadarmaki (1992) compares Ibn Khaldun's social theory with those of Al-Tabari, Al-Mas'udi and Al-Biruni. Mehmet Akif Kayapinar (2010) recently also undertook a comparative study of Ibn Khaldun's sociological thought by looking at the idea of *'Asabiyah* and social contract of his political theory. In the same year (2010), another study of his thoughts was done by Mehmet Soyer. The study traces the origins of sociology and its divergence by comparing his thoughts to those of some prominent Western social thinkers such as Emile Durkheim, Auguste Comte, Ludwig Gumplowicz and Gimmbattista Vico.

Lenn Evan Goodman (2012) compares Ibn Khaldun to that of other known scholars like Thucydides by looking at the ideas of history whereby both scholars share some similarities in terms of methods and assumptions including conclusions in their works on historical discipline.

2.2 COMPARATIVE WORKS INVOLVING ALI SHARI'ATI

While there are many comparative studies involving Ibn Khaldun, there are only a few such studies involving Ali Shari'ati including the one by Bahman Bakhtiari in 1984. Even that does not focus on his sociological thought but mainly on issues related to politics especially in the Middle East countries and the Latin American regions. In this study, Ali Shari'ati's thought is chosen to represent the thought of the Middle East region.

Another comparative study was conducted by Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi in 2004 entitled *Contentious Public Religion: Two Conceptions of Islam in Revolutionary Iran*. This study compares the thoughts of Ali Shari'ati and those of

Abdulkarim Soroush. Since then, there have been no comparative studies on Ali Shari'ati's sociological thoughts.

In short, we can say that based on the above review regarding comparative works, there is no work done so far that compares Ibn Khaldun and Ali Shari'ati.

2.3 OTHER WORKS ON IBN KHALDUN

Other works on Ibn Khaldun focus on his ideas of political theory such as that of Waseem El Rayes (2008) who provides a critical analysis of Ibn Khaldun's original introduction to *Kitab al-Ibar* and points out the political aspects of Ibn Khaldun's science of culture in order to explain the political objectives behind his concern in the study of history.

Damian Esteban (2004) also focuses on Ibn Khaldun's political theory as contained in *The Muqaddimah* i.e. Islamic teachings Ibn Khaldun used in developing the political theory. He also examines the nature of '*Asabiyah*' which according to Ibn Khaldun is the basis for all forms of human social and political organizations, and their relationship with religion in terms of their functions in the establishment and the propagation of the state.

Ali Hassan Zaidi (2007) examines Ibn Khaldun's thoughts in order to demonstrate that an empirical science of social reality is compatible with a normative religious vision where he also presupposes that the globalization of Western secular culture not only challenges the religious ways of life but discusses the resistance of Muslim societies to Western cultural penetration. He advocates the feasibility of a transformative dialogue that is aimed at exploring the meeting point in Human Science in a holistic manner. He argues that the main challenge with the Muslim

thought is the irrelevance of hierarchical thought as well as the inefficiency of Muslim thought to integrate with postmodern thought.

Siddiqah Kamil al-Digs (2012) examines the thoughts of Buber, Augustine and Ibn Khaldun in resolving inter-religious tensions in order to demonstrate their common ground in articulating morality as the basis for peace. Cheryl W. El-Amin (2009) studies how American Muslim social workers define and experience religious spirituality and perceives the propriety of integrating the views from Ibn Khaldun and Durkheim who both suggest that group feelings and affiliation impact personal and professional perception as well as in decision making.

Akbar Ahmed (2002) examines Ibn Khaldun's ideas on civilizations and analyses them in order to understand the current situation of the society. He suggests the revisiting and revision of the thoughts and ideas produced by Ibn Khaldun so that they may be applied to contemporary Muslim societies and Islamic social institutions worldwide.

Based on the above review, it is found that most recent studies on Ibn Khaldun's thoughts focus on his political thought and only a few studies examine his sociological thought.

2.4 OTHER WORKS ON ALI SHARI'ATI

Some works done by scholars on Ali Shari'ati can be found in political science. Abbas Navabi (1988) analyses and critiques the ideas of Ali Shari'ati in reference to the sources that influenced him i.e. Islamic reformism, the Western intellectual tradition, the third world cultural and ideological thoughts.

Christopher LaRossa (2011) examines the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West during the mid-20th century. He illustrates the development by utilizing the ideas and writings of Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shari'ati and Jalal al-e-Ahmad.

Siavash Saffari (2013), in examining the socio-political significance of Ali Shari'ati and neo-Shari'ati project, focuses on the theorization of an account of progressive public religion and a contextually grounded discourse of egalitarian secular democracy besides other theories.

Muhammad Amin Ghaneirad (2011) analyses the cognitive responses of the Iranian social scientists and critically reviews the modern Iranian intellectuals' attempts in developing alternative sociological fields. In doing so, he further analyses the thoughts of Jalal al-e Ahmad (1923-1969) and Ali Shari'ati (1933-1977) to explain the methods made by the Iranian social scientists in developing Islamic sociology which can be applied when studying Iranian Muslim society in particular.

Fadzli Adam (2014) examines the thoughts of Ali Shari'ati as well as other Muslim scholars in order to demonstrate how the word 'leader' in the early Muslim societies was commonly associated with the term *Khalifah* or *Imam* in both religious sects i.e. the Sunni and Shi'i. It is argued that the importance of appointing a *Khalifah* or *Imam* in the Muslim community is to serve the purpose of Islamic teachings, to ensure justice and to maintain order in the community.

Sumaya Mohamad Saleh (2012) examines Ali Shari'ati's thoughts in order to demonstrate the definition of Islamic society and to shed light on the functions of Islamic teachings and their relationship to the society.

Based on the above review, it is found that of all the recent studies on Ali Shari'ati, only a few are devoted to examining his sociological thought albeit superficially.

2.5 WORKS BY IBN KHALDUN

The Muqaddimah which was produced by Ibn Khaldun and written in 1377 records an early view of universal history. Some modern scholars and thinkers such as Toynbee (1947) view it as the first work that deals with the philosophy of history, science of society, demography, cultural history, etc. This work also deals with social organization, political theory, social conflict and economics.

Ibn Khaldun wrote *The Muqaddimah* as the introduction to his first planned work of the world history i.e. *Kitab al-Ibar (The Book of Lessons)* which recorded the beginnings and events in the history of the Arabs and Berbers. Among its contemporaries, *The Muqaddimah* is regarded as an independent work on its own.

2.6 WORKS BY ALI SHARI'ATI

Ali Shari'ati (1980) reminds people of the need to find the right and best solution in examining the prevailing movements that promise solutions for humanity. He analyses Marxism's roots in materialism, its relation to Hegelian dialectic, Marx's objection to religion and other crucial aspects of Marxism.

He also discusses the establishment of religions and ideologies like liberalism, and secularism. He also describes the refusal by the Westerners in the 19th and 20th centuries of man's spiritual dimensions. Throughout his inquiry, Ali Shari'ati offers comparison of these ideologies with the ideology of Islam, drawing upon the principles and precepts contained in the Qur'an as well as from the history of the